

# STATEMENT

BY

DR CHRISTISON AND PROFESSOR SYME,

WITH CONCURRENCE OF

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE MEDICAL FACULTY,

AS TO

THE SUPPRESSION OF THE

CHAIR OF GENERAL PATHOLOGY:

ADDRESSED TO

THE LORD PROVOST OF EDINBURGH.

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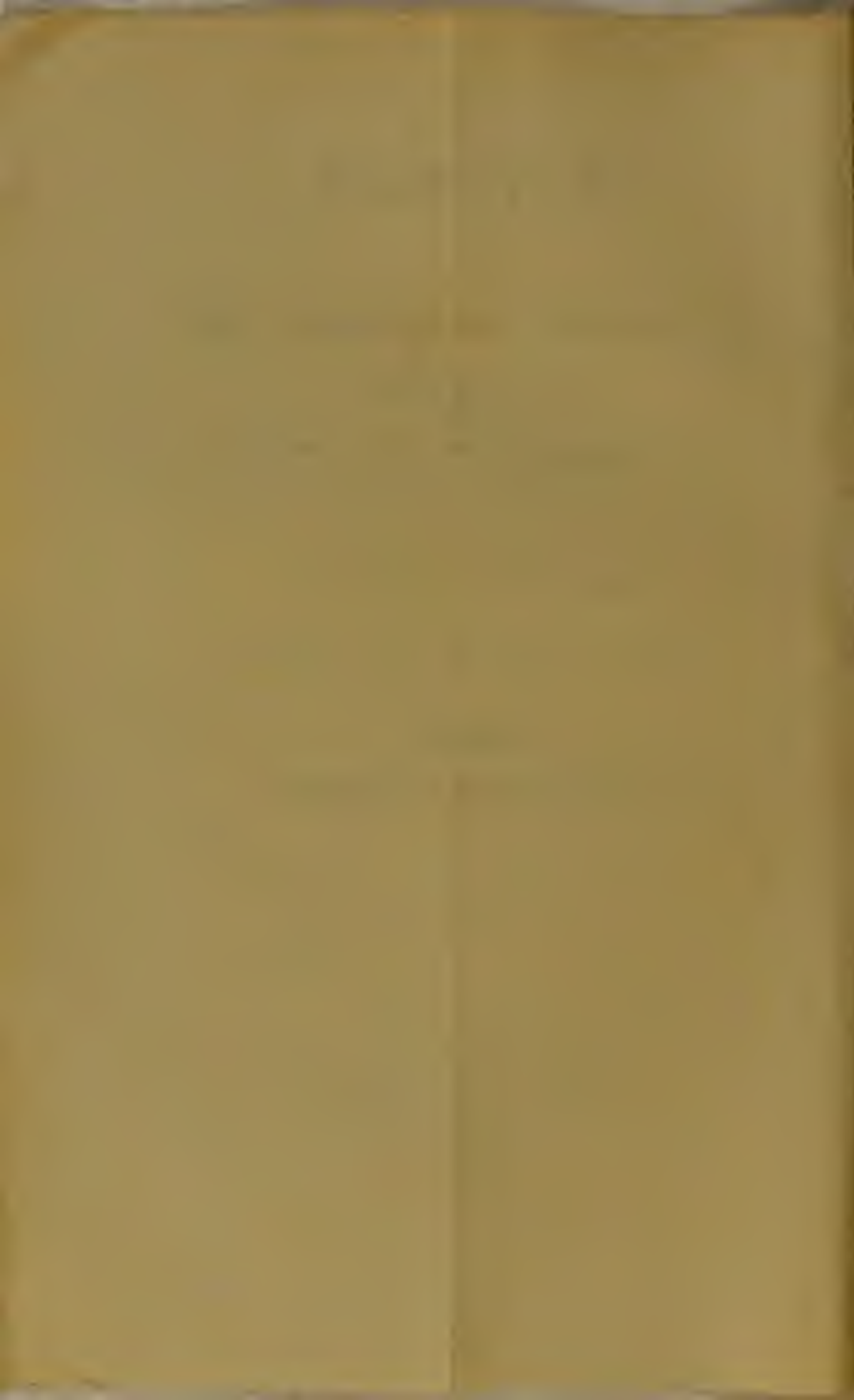
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1841.



*Edinburgh, 23d Sept. 1841.*

MY LORD,

THE Faculty of Medicine of the University having been requested by the College Committee of the Town Council, on the 17th instant, to prepare for the Council a Memorial containing their views as to the question, whether the Chair of General Pathology ought to be suppressed, I have communicated with several of my colleagues on the subject, and find they agree with me in opinion, that, without much greater delay than the Council would probably be willing to consent to, it is impossible, owing to the absence of a majority of the Members of the Faculty from town, to prepare an official representation by the whole body. In these circumstances, the members whose sentiments I have had an opportunity of learning, agree that the object of the Council and the interests of the University will be most effectually secured by Professor Syme and myself stating our own views and those of our colleagues who are opposed to the continuance of the General Pathology Chair. In order to prepare our representation soon enough for the meeting of the College Committee this forenoon, Professor Syme undertook to state our views on the question generally, and I have at the same time prepared some observations on the arguments which we have on different occasions heard advanced in favour of the Chair being continued, and which we were requested by some members of the College Committee of the Council on Friday last to take into our consideration. This explanation will account for some occasional repetitions, and other obvious defects, which, with more allowance of time, might have been avoided.

I beg to add, that although this document cannot be considered as the official representation of the Faculty, I have no reason to doubt that it conveys substantially the views of the whole thirteen members, with the exception of the Professors of General Pathology and of Midwifery.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient Servant,

R. CHRISTISON,  
*Dean of the Medical Faculty.*



## STATEMENT BY PROFESSOR SYME.

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THE Patrons desire to know the facts of the case in regard to the questioned propriety of maintaining a Chair of General Pathology in the University, and I am well pleased that such is their desire, since, so long as they permit themselves to be guided by the opinions of others, they run the risk of being misled by prejudiced or inaccurate information. But when they place the whole facts fairly before their own judgment, and decide from what admits of satisfactory demonstration to be true or false, they are sure of arriving at a safe conclusion.

The object of Pathology, as a department of medical instruction, is to teach the various derangements to which the human body is liable, together with the causes which give rise to them, and the symptoms which proceed from them. In former days, when dissection either of sound or morbid structure was comparatively little practised, diseases were treated more with reference to their external signs, and vague ideas of their supposed origin, than from positive knowledge of their actual seat and nature. But in recent times great attention has been devoted to this subject, and hence the improvements which we find introduced into the Practice of Medicine. So prominent a place indeed has Pathology obtained in the study of Physic as well as of Surgery, that its title instead of theirs is now frequently employed to denote the subject of lectures and books. Thus, in Paris and other continental schools, the Chairs which correspond to those of the Practice of Physic and the Practice of Surgery in our University, have the designations of Internal Pathology and External Pathology, and treatises on these subjects are even in this country occasionally so named.

Such being the nature and scope of Pathology, its importance in medical education does not require the enforcement of any argument, though room for question may remain as to the best mode of teaching it. The course that seems most plain and obvious, is to take the different derangements to which the body is liable, so far as possible, in some regular order, and describe each of them in succession, together with the means considered most effectual for their remedy. We ac-

cordingly find the Professor of the Practice of Physic explaining the various complaints which proceed from diseased conditions of internal parts, while the Professor of Surgery discharges a similar duty in regard to those affections which are situated externally, or require, in their treatment, the performance of external operations. The Professor of Midwifery, in a more limited department, teaches the Pathology of women in the puerperal state, and also that of children in the early season of infancy. The Professor of Military Surgery has his attention more particularly directed to the pathological condition of military men, whether resulting from the conflicts of warfare or the influence of climate. The four Professors of Clinical Medicine, who fulfil this duty in addition to that of the Chairs to which they respectively belong, and the Professor of Clinical Surgery, are constantly engaged in the most strictly pathological instruction, visiting the patients in the hospital, examining their bodies after death, and lecturing on their cases while under treatment. In addition to all this, the Professor of the Institutes of Medicine has the duty assigned to him of explaining those general considerations of Pathology which are best suited for being taught separately from the description of particular diseases. It has been said that the present Professor of the Institutes has omitted this part of his Course, from want of sufficient time; but such is not the fact, Dr Alison having suppressed his Pathological Lectures, to which he had previously paid great attention, only since, and merely in consequence of, the institution of a Chair specially devoted to the subject. Were this Chair abolished, he would resume the proper duty of his province; and if he were not to do so, the Patrons might call upon him to fulfil the terms of his commission. There are thus *ten* members of the Medical Faculty who not only may, but must, Lecture on Pathology, and there is still another Chair, viz. that of Anatomy, from which much information on the same subject is delivered.

In these circumstances it may be asked, How did a Chair exclusively devoted to Pathology ever come to be instituted in our University? But as this inquiry could not be pursued without the risk of hurting the feelings of persons deserving the greatest respect, and as the question properly under consideration at present is not, how the Chair happened to be instituted, but whether it ought to be maintained, I will proceed to state the considerations which, in the opinion of my colleagues and myself, render the permanent establishment of this Professorship highly inexpedient.

It would be difficult to determine what is the proper field of General Pathology. Many think it the same with that of the Practice of Physic, and allege as a reason for maintaining the Chair, that the double Professorship thus provided will tend to insure an important department of instruction being well taught,—an argument of course



applying with at least equal force to other Chairs in the University, and plainly leading to an absurd result.

In a wider acceptation, General Pathology is understood to embrace the whole subject of morbid derangement,—thus including the local alterations of structure, the causes of diseases, and their symptoms. In a field of such boundless extent, the teacher must either limit his Lectures to some particular department, or attempt to comprehend the whole by wide and general views. But in adopting the former of these plans, he inevitably renders his Course a reduplication or repetition of some other one taught in the University, as has been already noticed in regard to the Practice of Physic. And if, on the other hand, he chooses the latter-mentioned method, he will take the most certain steps for mistifying the minds of his hearers; since, instead of giving them well-defined Ideas, which, from their practical application, can be fully understood and distinctly recollected, he will bewilder them with a maze of uncertainty and conjecture.

There is another way in which the Course of Pathology seems to prove injurious as well as useless. In learning any subject, it is of the greatest consequence that the Student should not be confused by having his attention distracted by a multiplicity of objects, or by hearing conflicting statements regarding them. Now, whether, before or after acquiring the Pathological knowledge imparted to him by the Professors who teach it in connexion with practical details, if he is led to survey the subjects of their instructions differently grouped, and perhaps differently represented or described, he cannot fail to experience more difficulty in fully comprehending them than he would otherwise have done. It is hardly necessary to remark, that the case is very different in regard to the varieties of practice, which are best explained and exemplified by the different Physicians who conduct the Clinical Course.

The objection to a separate Chair of Pathology which is perhaps the most important of the whole, may be lastly mentioned. In appointing Professors to practical Chairs, the patrons are well aware how essential it is that, whatever other qualifications candidates may have, they at all events possess experience in the practice of that department which it is proposed to teach. Nothing indeed could be more calculated to injure the character of the institution, or directly as well as indirectly affect the most important interests of the public, than allowing any consideration of talent or industry to stand as equivalent for this grand qualification. But if the case be so, it is surely in the highest degree inconsistent and absurd to mix up with the regular courses of systematic instruction by practical men, another Course of Lectures extending over the whole subject of Pathology, and delivered from a Chair which is not held to require, or rather does not admit of, a practical occupant. That the Professor cannot possess a practical acquaintance with the

whole subject of his instructions, will at once appear, when it is recollected that his province embraces the entire extent of Pathology, while the most that any individual can accomplish in practice is the cultivation of a part. Thus Physic, Surgery, and Midwifery, with their respective Pathologies, may be taught from practical experience; but every one who attempts to give instruction on all of these subjects, as a Professor of General Pathology is required to do, must obtain his information from books. And that this is not very difficult, will appear from Dr Simpson's statement at the conference, that when suddenly called upon, with only eight days' notice, to discharge the duties of Dr Thomson's course,—not choosing to read the Professor's Lectures,—he had written one every morning for the day's use.

The Medical Faculty, with the exception of the Professor of Pathology, and his late assistant the Professor of Midwifery, holding that the Chair of General Pathology is not only useless, but injurious, and, on these grounds, earnestly desiring its abolition, also view with regret the sacrifice of time and money which its maintenance occasions to the Students. In the last ten years upwards of L.400 have been annually abstracted from the Graduates of our University on account of the Chair of General Pathology; and during the same period an hour a day throughout the whole six months' Winter Session has been devoted to attendance on this Class. The time allotted for fulfilling the Curriculum is otherwise so burdened, that the greatest difficulty has been experienced in arranging the different hours of Lecture; and notwithstanding every exertion to prevent such inconvenient collisions, several Courses, of which the Pathology is one, are delivered at the same time. It is important also to notice, that as no other Chair of General Pathology exists in any University or Medical School within the British dominions, every Student who wishes to graduate in Edinburgh must attend this Course here. To what extent the knowledge of such an obstacle to graduation may have affected the number of Students, it would be difficult to ascertain with certainty. We know that it has deterred Students from coming here, and that those who do come constantly complain of the hardship which they conceive themselves to suffer from it.

In reply to what has been stated, it may be said that Chairs of General Pathology exist in many of the Continental Schools, and therefore must be deserving of adoption. But this inference is rather hasty, and cannot be properly drawn until it is admitted that the continental system of medical education is better than that of our own country. It is certainly very different, being of a theoretical or speculative character, while the instruction here is directed more with a view to its practical results. I will not presume to decide which ought to be preferred, any further than by reminding the Patrons that



British Physicians and Surgeons stand higher as practitioners than those of any other country ; but I beg most seriously to protest against the example of foreign Schools being allowed to regulate the course of education in this country in any particular department, until the general question has been settled in their favour.

I must now discharge a painful duty in noticing the letter which was published by Dr Simpson in the Scotsman newspaper of Saturday last, relative to the question now under the consideration of the Patrons. The conference with the College Committee, to which the Medical Faculty was invited, and the free opportunity which has been afforded to every member of it for the written as well as verbal expression of his sentiments, left no pretext for enlisting the sympathies of the public by *ex parte* statements on the subject ; and on this account I read the letter alluded to with no less surprise than regret. At the same time I remarked, that the statements contained in it as to matters of fact were in an extraordinary degree inaccurate ; and though it has been deemed improper, under existing circumstances, for any member of our body to enter the arena of newspaper controversy farther than our Dean has done in vindicating us from the insinuation of unworthy motives, I feel it necessary to warn the Patrons against being misled by his statements.

In order to enforce the propriety of circumscribing Dr Alison's duty to the teaching of Physiology, he states that, " in other Schools, as in University College, London, a period of six months is, as it certainly ought to be, laid out for that single branch alone." Now the fact is, that Dr Sharpey, who formerly lectured on Anatomy in Edinburgh, is Professor of Anatomy and Physiology in University College, and, in the Course which he delivers, combines instruction in both of these branches. The statement, therefore, is equally adverse to the accuracy and the argument of its author.

To show that the Chair of General Pathology in our University is not altogether without a parallel in this country, he states, that " in University College, London, there has existed for several years a Professorship of Morbid Anatomy. The tickets of Dr Carswell, who till lately held that Professorship, have in more than one instance been received by our Medical Faculty here as equivalent to the tickets of our Professor of General Pathology." Now Dr Simpson ought to know that the tickets of Dr Carswell have never in a single instance been received by the Medical Faculty here as *equivalent* to those of the Professor of General Pathology, although on some few occasions, *with his express sanction*, they have been accepted *instead* of the proper qualification, by special indulgence, on account of particular circumstances in the candidate's case.

By way of showing how unscrupulous the Medical Faculty have been in loading the Curriculum with other Chairs, it is stated, that "in 1833, my medical colleagues voluntarily added, 1. Natural History; 2. Practical Anatomy; 3. Medical Jurisprudence; and, 4. Clinical Surgery." The fact is, that previous to 1833, of the four classes just mentioned, and a fifth, Military Surgery, candidates were required to attend any two they pleased; and the Medical Faculty then, not approving of this optional system, with the sanction of the Professor of Military Surgery, omitted his class from the Curriculum, and made attendance on the others imperative,—so that *two*, and not *four*, Courses were added.

Under the impression, apparently, that General Pathology is the same with the Practice of Physic,—though in another part of his letter he represents Dr Thomson's Course as entirely different,—he says, "I would beg you (Mr Bankes) to remember, that the diploma or degree conferred by our University is that of Physician, and not of Surgeon. Yet in the examination for our degree, *three* Professors of Surgery (Professors Ballingall, Bell, Syme) are concerned; and, if the Pathology Chair be abolished, only *one* Professor of Physic properly so speaking (Dr Home). Would not that be a strange anomaly in such an examining board?" Now Dr Simpson knows well that the first-mentioned Professor takes no part in the surgical examinations, being associated with the Professor of Anatomy in examining on this branch, and that both of the others never examine the same candidate, unless his case appear doubtful; so that, in truth, there is but *one* examination in Surgery, just as there is *one* in the Practice of Physic;—in which department, besides the Professor of the Practice of Physic, two Practical Physicians, Drs Christison and Traill, may, and do, give their assistance when required.

If my object were to convict Dr Simpson of the most gross and inexplicable inaccuracy, I could easily multiply examples of it; but merely desiring to prevent the Patrons from being misled by his statements, and trusting that enough has been said to attain this object, I will conclude by noticing a remark which is not unfrequently heard when the opinions of the Medical Faculty are expressed or quoted.

It is said that they are interested parties, and therefore not worthy of credit. Now the first part of this statement is quite true. They are interested parties. But as their interest is the same with that of the University, it does not very clearly appear why, on this account, their testimony should have less weight than that of those who are not dependent on the prosperity of the institution, or who may even have an unfriendly feeling towards it. All that each member of the Medical Faculty could directly gain by the Chair of Pathology being abolished would be about L.6. 10s. a year, supposing the number of candidates for the medical degree to remain at the present amount; an ob-

ject, one might think, hardly sufficient to dazzle their vision in taking views for the good of the establishment. Had such been our motives, we should hardly have transmitted the subjoined offer, on the former occasion of Dr Thomson's contemplated resignation.

JAMES SYME,  
*Professor of Clinical Surgery.*

*Edinburgh, 7th July 1837.*

"WE, the undersigned Medical Professors in the University of Edinburgh, understanding that the Town-Council, as Patrons of the University, have resolved to accept Dr Thomson's resignation of the Chair of General Pathology, and engaged that he shall receive L.150 annually as a retiring allowance from his successor, respectfully beg to make the following proposal:—

"Believing that the institution of a Chair of General Pathology in the University, though so far justified by the high reputation and eminent qualifications of Dr Thomson, was not required or expedient, since the subjects appropriated to it are inseparably connected with several other established departments of medical instruction, and most profitably taught in connection with them; and knowing that the circumstance of such a Course being imperative on candidates for graduation in Edinburgh is peculiarly oppressive, as there is no similar Chair in any other University of Great Britain or Ireland, we earnestly desire that this Professorship be abolished; and we therefore respectfully propose to the Council that it be now abolished, and that the retiring allowance to Dr Thomson shall be defrayed from the proceeds of a Course of Lectures on General Pathology, which we are willing to undertake to deliver annually during his lifetime, on the understanding that the fee shall not exceed what may be estimated as sufficient for the purpose, and that any incidental surplus shall go to the matriculation fund.

"We are willing to bind ourselves to make good the full amount of Dr Thomson's salary: and we hope that this proposal will appear to the Council sufficient proof, that in desiring the abolition of the Chair of General Pathology, we are actuated solely by our thorough conviction of its being unnecessary and injurious to the interests of the Medical School, and by our anxiety to maintain the credit and efficiency of the University.

(Signed)

"W. P. ALISON, P. Institutes of Medicine.

"R. CHRISTISON, P. Materia Medica.

"JAMES SYME, P. Clinical Surgery.

"CHARLES BELL, P. Surgery."





## STATEMENT BY DR CHRISTISON.

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PROFESSOR SYME having consented to prepare a general statement of the views entertained by the Medical Faculty, as to the maintenance of the Chair of General Pathology, I shall, at the request of my colleagues, confine my attention to an inquiry into the validity of the more important of the arguments which have been adduced in favour of founding and keeping up the Chair. These arguments have been often put forward before, but were revived in a new shape by the Professor of Midwifery, at a conference held on Friday last, between the Faculty and the Committee of the Council; on which occasion they were supported by a statement of facts, in whose accuracy his colleagues can by no means concur.

If in the course of my observations it shall appear that my statement of the views taken of the facts of the case by his colleagues differs most materially from his, I trust it will also be found that it has not been expressed in such a way as to give any just cause of offence. Nothing, at all events, can be farther from my intention; and I have only to add, that I trust the Council will believe it is with great regret that, upon a question of a kind to create unpleasant discussion, if not temperately treated, a difference of opinion on the part of any one of our colleagues should have arisen, in a body previously unanimous in their sentiment.—and that I am, in common with my colleagues, ready to make every possible allowance for the dissentient opinions of one who must naturally be somewhat biased in favour of the Chair of General Pathology, by the circumstance, that he taught it for some time, at a very early period in his professional career, as the deputy of the present Professor.

Among the different expedients resorted to by the advocates of this Chair, in order to prove its necessity, an inference in its favour has been attempted to be drawn from the constitution of the Chair of the Institutes of Medicine, and the mode in which it is now taught by its present occupant, Dr Alison.

The subject of that Professorship has been held to comprise three departments, Physiology, General Pathology, and General Therapeutics.



Now it is alleged that the department of Physiology is alone sufficient to occupy the attention of a single Professor; and that the present occupant of the Chair must himself be of that opinion, because he has of late years abandoned not only the branch of General Pathology, but likewise that of General Therapeutics. Nay, it seems to be farther suggested, that, as the last branch is undeniably important, instead of two Professorships being too many to make out of the Chair of the Institutes of Medicine, they are, on the contrary, one too few.

It may be well here, in the first instance, to remind the Patrons, that not many years ago this Chair, now represented to be so comprehensive, was strenuously maintained by the *late* Professor of Midwifery to be wholly unnecessary. And the allegation, on a superficial view, is not destitute of some show of reason; inasmuch as Physiology, in the opinion of many, should be taught with Anatomy, Pathology with the Practice of Physic, and Therapeutics with Materia Medica; and, in point of fact, such is actually the case in many Medical Schools of this country, where no Chair of the Institutes of Medicine exists. This statement is made merely to show the kind of value to be attached to the sentiments, however strongly expressed, of single individuals. For certainly the Faculty of Medicine never have entertained a moment's doubt of the Institutes of Medicine forming an important, well-defined Chair, according to the organization of the Medical Professorships of this University.

It is true that of late years the present Professor of that subject has allowed the branch of Pathology to drop from his Lectures. It may be a grave matter of doubt with his colleagues and the Medical Profession generally, whether the great interests of medical education here have benefited by events which have led to this department having been abandoned by one so qualified to teach it. But Dr Alison has been conscientiously compelled to this course by the conviction that, while the department in question was previously in many respects a repetition of what is taught as a large and inseparable branch of the Practice of Physic, a double repetition of the same subject, after the foundation of the Professorship of General Pathology, was wholly superfluous. If again it be urged, that the same Professor has also surrendered the department of General Therapeutics, it must not be alleged, as has been done on the present occasion, that this important topic would be at present untaught in the University, but for the continuance of the Chair of Pathology. A Professor of the Institutes of Medicine may fairly circumscribe his Lectures on Therapeutics, if he be satisfied that the subject is fully discussed, as is the case at present, by the Professors of the Practice of Physic and Materia Medica, of whose

Lectures Therapeutics, or the Actions and Uses of Medicines, constitute a most material part.

But besides, what does the present argument amount to, when looked at in a comprehensive point of view. The Faculty distinctly deny that the mode in which the Professor of the Institutes of Medicine has regarded the constitution of his Chair, and the manner in which he has taught it with relation to the mode in which collateral Chairs are organized and taught, leave any blank whatever in the system of medical instruction pursued at this University. Grant, however, that the case were otherwise. Is the Faculty to be told, that if, in any branch of Medicine taught in the University of Edinburgh, a Professor under particular circumstances drops, perhaps for a time, a special branch generally thought to belong to his subject, the deficiency in the general system of education at the School, —supposing it really to exist, which it does not in the present instance,—must forthwith be supplied by instituting a distinct, permanent, and imperatively necessary course of Lectures by a new Professor? Will it be tolerated that, when an individual possesses professional eminence and influence enough, he has only to look round him and see what Professor has unwarily furnished him with such an argument, in order straightway to establish a claim for a Chair to be founded for himself?

Suppose the Professor of the Practice of Physic were, for some reason or another, to abandon Pathology,—or rather, to vary the subject, suppose he were to omit contagious diseases from his Course of Lectures,—are the Patrons to be told that they should turn round to the German Universities, observe how in some of them a separate Course of Instruction is given upon that topic, and should therefore found a Professorship of Contagious Diseases? Suppose the Professor of Materia Medica, of whose Course fully two fifths are occupied with the branch of Therapeutics, or the Actions and Uses of Medicines, were to abandon that branch, or teach it imperfectly, as one of his predecessors was charged with doing,—or suppose he were to omit his other branch of Pharmacy, that is, the Sources, Description, Nature, and Preparation of Medicines, as Dr Cullen, when he taught the Chair, actually did,—are the Pupils of the University to be on that account burdened with the expenditure of additional funds and additional precious time, consequent on the institution of a new and imperative Chair, to fill up the blank? If the Professor of Midwifery were to neglect the department of the Diseases of Children, specified in his commission, what would he say were the Patrons on that account requested to thrust a colleague upon him to teach the subject, seeing that one or more distinct Professors teach it in most German Universities? Or what, if, out of his department of the Diseases of Females, he were called on to surrender, to some

gay practitioner in the Obstetric Art, the charge of an exclusive and imperative Course of Lectures on the Diseases of Ladies !—for a distinct Professorship on that head also exists in several Universities of Germany ? Or, should our Professor of Botany, following the example of his predecessor and many other teachers of his science, omit the cryptogamic plants from his system of instruction, are we forthwith, in imitation of our brethren at a German University, to have a distinct Course of Lectures upon mosses, funguses, and tangles ?

These are all cases parallel to that of the Pathology Chair. And the answer is simple. If such Chairs, when founded, could be also endowed, as abroad, so that no necessity would arise to support them at the expense of the Student, it might possibly be right to found them all. But this condition being unattainable here, great caution must be observed in trying innovations based on the false analogy of foreign Schools ; and care should be taken, in the mean time, *that Edinburgh Professors teach their subjects according to the terms and meaning of their commissions.*

The last observation leads me to take notice more particularly of the argument deduced in favour of the Chair of General Pathology, from the analogy of foreign Universities. It is said that a Chair of General Pathology, or rather several Chairs devoted to the different branches of that subject, exist in all the German Universities, “ even in the little German Universities ;” and also that a Chair for it has been recently founded in the University of Paris. But they who advance these facts as an argument must be little acquainted with the subject they talk about. For the whole organization of Chairs, the manner of teaching them, the mode of attending them, and the means of supporting them, are so different in Germany and France from what is the case here, that an analogy, in regard to any particular part of the respective systems, cannot be formed without great risk of error.

It is urged, in the first place, that a Chair or Chairs of General Pathology exist in all, “ even the little German Universities.” With due submission, I must decline the analogy formed between the system to be pursued at this School and that of any little University, whose constituted authorities may do many little things, and among the rest found many little Professorships, and yet do no great harm to the world or themselves. But, for the information of the Patrons, I shall take the instance of that University of Germany, whose Medical School was established most recently, and at present enjoys in this and other countries the greatest celebrity of all continental Schools of Medicine, with the exception of Paris.

The Medical School of the University of Berlin unquestionably contains Professorships of General Pathology. Last year, in fact, no



fewer than five distinct Courses of Lectures, by five different teachers, were given on its various departments. Even on the very face of it, is this an example,—and all the great Universities in Germany are more or less similarly circumstanced—is this an example which we are to be asked to follow?

The existence of these Chairs in Berlin, and other German Universities, is connected with a peculiar system, which I beg now to explain, and none of whose frame-work has, in its principles or details, any real counterpart in this University. The Professors of Berlin receive from the government what is considered a liberal salary in Germany, and a trifling fee from such Students as choose to attend their Lectures. They are not, as here, restricted to a particular subject, but may, and many do, give several courses on different departments of Medical Science. Candidates for the degree of Doctor of Medicine are not required to attend any particular Professor, and not even absolutely any particular Course of Lectures; but are expected to show up, when they proceed to examination, a full and judicious general system of oral instruction, the soundness of which, and the candidates' diligence, are judged of by varied and tedious trials. Under this organization, so different in all its details from our own, there have arisen, as appears from the list for 1840, forty-eight Medical Lecturers. There are thirty-four Professors, and fourteen Teachers, not Professors, yet attached to the University. These give no fewer than seventy-two Courses of Lectures. A few years ago they gave eighty-seven. In this unwieldy corps there is no Professorship corresponding with our Institutes of Medicine; there are no Lectures corresponding exactly with our Natural History, with our Materia Medica, or even with our Practice of Physic; while there are Professorships or Lectureships on Diseases of the Eye, on the History of Physic, on Propædæutics, and other limited or abstruse departments. It is scarcely necessary to prolong this statement; yet it may just be added, that eight Professors and Teachers lecture on Natural History in its several branches, three on Anatomy, three on Physiology, three on General Therapeutics, five on what comes nearest our Materia Medica (*Heilmittellehre*), two on Chemistry, nine on Special Pathology, four on Diseases of the Eye, twelve on Surgery, four on Midwifery, eight on Clinical Medicine, three on Clinical Surgery, four on Medical Jurisprudence, and two on the History of Medicine.

In Edinburgh, Professorships are founded solely for the instruction of Students; they are supported, all of them in a great measure, most of them entirely, at the cost of the Students; and Students who are candidates for medical and surgical honours must attend them. It is plain then that they ought not to be numerous, that, without a total change

in the Regulations as to attendance, and the source from which they are maintained, there must be as little superfluity as possible. In Germany, Chairs are often founded merely to give station, means of study, and opportunity of instructing, to eminent individuals, who, in many States, without being connected with a University, are not allowed to Lecture; they are often founded only for the life-time of the first occupant, as a reward of merit; they are supported mainly by salaries from government; and Students are not compelled to attend any particular Professor. Whether there ought to be Chairs in this University upon the same footing, to give station and learned leisure to men of eminence, but without burdening the Student, is a grave question, which I am not now called on to consider. But it is submitted, that until the University possesses such Chairs, the parallel attempted to be drawn between it and the Universities of Germany is altogether inadmissible.

The argument in favour of the Pathology Chair, which is founded on the organization of the Parisian School, is in most respects similarly circumstanced. The Medical Chairs in Paris are not so overwhelming in number as at Berlin, but the Professors are supported entirely by Crown salaries, and candidates for medical honours are not compelled to attend their Lectures. The Professors receive each of them about L.600 of salary, and derive individually no emoluments from Students. The Students pay a small matriculation-fee once a quarter, which entitles them to attend any Courses of Lectures they choose; and if there is nominally an imperative course of study, there is in effect no imperative class, since there is no means of enforcing attendance; and, in point of fact, I have witnessed in Paris, where the principal Medical Chairs ought to be, and many actually are, attended by a thousand Students, certain Professors lecturing to five-and-twenty or thirty Pupils only. Besides, even suppose attendance were enforced, the hardship of attending a superfluity of Lecturers and Lectures would be comparatively insignificant. For, while nothing would be added to the expense on the part of Students, little would be added to the expenditure of time; because the Parisian Lectures are given for the most part twice, and seldom oftener than thrice, a week, so that a great number may easily be followed in a single season.

Even with all these facilities in favour of the erection of new Chairs, the Parisian Medical Faculty resisted the institution of the Chair of General Pathology in 1831. The result showed that they had good reason. For during the eight years of the incumbency of Professor Broussais, a man of great talent, and very popular previously as a clinical instructor, the attendance of Students on the Lectures fell away to a very small number; and it is but reasonable, in the view taken of the constitution of that Chair by the Medical Faculty of Edinburgh, to as-



cribe this result mainly to the subject of the Chair being a superfluity, and to the fact, that the kindred subject of the Practice of Physic was ably taught all the while by its Professor, Andral.

It is true that this gentleman has recently exchanged the Chair of the Practice of Physic for that of General Pathology, vacated by the death of Bronssais two years ago. It remains to be seen what will be the result of the change; for it is not the experience of one or two years that will suffice for this purpose. But even supposing this Professor prove successful, it is humbly represented that, if a man who ranks as the most eminent Pathologist of the day, who is the best employed physician in the French capital, and who has been for some time a highly popular Professor of the Practice of Physic, should carry his pupils and his popularity with him into the kindred Chair of Pathology, where he may, and must, teach in a great measure the same topics differently grouped,—this circumstance would constitute but a feeble argument for founding or keeping up a similar Chair in the very differently organized University of Edinburgh.

Quitting foreign Universities, which manifestly constitute no safe guide to follow, let me next point out the real merits of another argument adduced in favour of maintaining here a distinct Chair of General Pathology,—namely, that an equivalent Chair has been founded in University College, London, and that Lectureships have been established in several “even of the minor Schools” of that city.

As to the minor Schools of London, it really seems surprising that they should be quoted as authorities. In London, minor Schools every now and then rise without being noticed, and sink without being missed. In some of them the attendance is so miserably small, that the Lecturers seem to have taken a part in them, rather for the sake of the little notoriety of their advertisements, than for the sober purpose of successfully teaching a medical science. And the Teachers are nowise restrained, but may take one subject of prelection this year, and another the next in the event of failure. It is a mere farce to call such institutions “Schools of Medicine.” Besides, what has been the success of these so-called Lectureships on General Pathology? Has any one of the Teachers ever drawn together a class? Can it be proved that there is a single Teacher of General Pathology in London at the present moment, who has met with even decent encouragement?—No, not one.

It is said, however, there is, in University College, London, a Chair equivalent to that of General Pathology in Edinburgh. The Patrons will presently see there is no such thing. But grant that there is: what has been its success? The true question to consider is not, whether Chairs may be discovered here and there approaching in nature to the Edinburgh Chair of General Pathology,—but whether any of these

equivalent or approximative Chairs, after a reasonable trial, has met with due encouragement? University College, London, supplies the answer. Taught for many years by Dr Carswell, a Pathologist of eminence, and author of one of the best systematic works on Pathological Anatomy in the English language, the Pathological Chair of that College has been all but a total failure,—and from no fault or deficiency on the part of its esteemed late occupant, but simply, as the Edinburgh Faculty conceive, from the subject having been felt to be a superfluity in the peculiar organization of Medical Professorships in this country.

But the fact is, this London Chair is not equivalent to the Edinburgh Chair of Pathology. Strong asseverations to this effect have been made, which can scarcely fail to mislead the Patrons if uncontradicted; and, among other things, it is alleged that the Faculty of Medicine here have actually in some instances received it from candidates as equivalent. I think this erroneous statement ought not to have been urged by Dr Simpson, after I put him right as to the fact. The real truth is, the Faculty could not receive it as equivalent from any candidate, although the subject of lecture were identical with General Pathology, because the course in London extends only to three or four months instead of six. And as Dean of the Medical Faculty for two years past, and also for a twelvemonth eight years before, I know it has never been received as equivalent. But in two or three instances of peculiar difficulty or hardship,—two I remember particularly where the candidates, having no previous course of Natural History, and coming here for a single season only, were obliged to attend Professor Jameson, who lectures at the same hour with Dr Thomson,—the lectures of Dr Carswell have been received, together with peculiar opportunities of instruction in Practical Pathology, as a succedaneum only, with a special provision that the cases were not to be held as precedents, and not till the Faculty received in each case the special consent of Dr Thomson. Both Dr Thomson, and his son Dr William Thomson, who has for some time been his deputy in the Chair, know well the care I have personally taken upon this point. It is rather surprising, therefore, that Dr Simpson's statement should be so pertinaciously urged.

But perhaps it is unnecessary to press this matter. For, being unable to face the fact of the ill success of the London Chair, the very individual who instances it as an equivalent Chair, turned round at the conference of the Faculty with the College Committee of the Patrons, and averred that the subject of the Chair in University College is, after all, not the same. Nor is it. The London Chair, as well as the Lectureships of "the minor London Schools," is a Chair of Morbid Anatomy,—a branch only of General Pathology in the wide signification of that term.

The Patrons have also been told the importance of the Chair of General Pathology may be inferred from the circumstance, that attendance on the subject has been required as a branch of medical study by the regulations of the London University, the Army Medical Board, and the Navy Medical Board. The truth is, however, that attendance on General Pathology is not imperatively required by any of these bodies. If it were so, there must have arisen an absolute necessity for a Chair or Lectureship on it in every Medical School in the Empire; and everywhere the subject would have met with encouragement among the Students, of whom very many are educated with a view to the Public Service.

The Senate of the London University require their candidates for graduation to attend only six courses in all, and leave them to select, each his own six, from among no fewer than sixteen specified subjects of lecture. General Pathology is admitted to be one of these. But will any man gravely pretend to say that General Pathology is thus made imperative? Or does he seriously think that candidates, left to their own choice, will select it for one of the six, so long as they have to study Chemistry, Anatomy, Physiology, Surgery, Practice of Physic, *Materia Medica*, and other most essential medical sciences? Should he reply in the affirmative, he is answered by the fact, that Students do not study it, except in Edinburgh,—where, for more cogent reasons, they cannot help themselves.

The Army and Navy Boards do not make attendance on General Pathology imperative. The last regulations I have seen (and I am not aware of there having been any change in this respect) state that gentlemen intended for the army or navy medical service shall attend a long Course or Courses on the Practice of Physic; and that, instead of one of the repetitions of that Course, they may, if they choose, attend General Pathology. All that the Faculty can see in this regulation is the announcement of the opinion of these Boards, in concurrence with the sentiments of the Faculty, that substantially a Course of Lectures on General Pathology is “equivalent to” a Course on the Practice of Physic. Why otherwise is the one taken as a substitute for the other?

My colleagues have not thought it advisable to mix up with the question, as to the propriety of keeping up the Pathology Chair, any statements upon the other question,—whether, in the event of its being kept up, it ought to be made or not any longer imperative. They believe it will best contribute to a sound decision on the former, that it be kept quite unencumbered by the latter inquiry; which, if necessary, may be taken up afterwards.

R. CHRISTISON.







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